

Scotland County Natural Areas Inventory

SANDHILLS GAME LAND [MANAGED AREA]

Site Number: I

Size: 59,498 acres total (includes Moore and Richmond counties); 22,546 acres in Scotland County

Site Significance: National

Quadrangles: [Scotland County portion]

Ownership: N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Gibson, Hoffman, Marston, Pinebluff, Silver Hill, Wagram

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES (from Sorrie 2001): “Sandhills Game Land is one of the premier natural landscapes in the southeastern United States. SGL has large size, a mostly intact ecosystem, a wide range of high quality plant community types, a high diversity of plant and animal life, and presence of many rare species (state and federal). Moreover, management and ecological processes occur on a landscape scale. SGL lies within the Sandhills Physiographic Region, which occupies a narrow zone at the western edge of the coastal plain extending from about Sanford, NC southwestward to Columbus, GA. The great majority of this region has been highly altered by forest conversion, farming, urban and suburban development, etc., leaving relatively few natural areas of large size. Remaining large areas which support good to high quality ecosystems are almost all on military or public land: Fort Bragg (NC), Camp Mackall (NC), Sandhills Game Land (NC), Sand Hills State Forest (SC), Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge (SC), Fort Gordon (near Augusta, GA), Fort Benning (near Columbus, GA). With the exception of Fort Bragg, none of these properties equals SGL in its ecological significance.

“Given current levels of management, the significance of SGL can only improve, as more and more acres of the longleaf ecosystem in private hands are developed or converted to plantations. Already we have lost forever the continuous mantle of longleaf pines across the coastal plain landscape; in its place we have a patchwork of isolated sites in natural condition, which will only become more isolated from each other in the future. This has important implications regarding interbreeding of populations (genetic exchange) and species viability over the long term. In areas such as the North Carolina Sandhills, we are fortunate to have several preserves in close proximity, thus forming a “population pool” for each species. If a population in one area declines, there probably are sufficient populations nearby to replenish it. Also, protection (through easement or otherwise) of intervening properties can provide valuable corridors for species movements.”

As of early 2005, roughly 40 rare plants and 30 rare animals have been documented from SGL. One of the animals is Federally Endangered: red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*). Three of the plants are Federally Endangered: rough-leaf loosestrife (*Lysimachia asperulifolia*), Michaux’s sumac (*Rhus michauxii*), and chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*). Over 970 plant species have been documented (Sorrie 1998). Some of the plant communities found here rank among the best of their kind anywhere; these include the common Xeric Sandhill Scrub,